held discussions with the Prime Minister. The talks covered bilateral relations, regional and international matters.

Both sides agreed on the need to intensify the excellent relations that exist between the two neighbouring countries, to increase exchanges at various levels including Parliamentary delegations, students and cultural groups and to step up commercial and economic interaction. Border and security-related issues were reviewed. Both sides reiterated their commitment to SAARC in view of the important role it could play in promoting regional cooperation.

(c) No, Sir.

Rationale of Negotiating Kashmir issue with Pakistan

2506. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government's declared stand on Kashmir is that it is an integral part of India; and

(b) if so, what is the rationale of negotiating Kashmir issue with Pakistan, as announced recently by the Prime Minister?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) The State of Jammu & Kashmir is an integral part of the Indian Union. A part of the territory of the State is under the illegal and forcible occupation of Pakistan. India is committed to resolution of all outstanding issues with Pakistan, including its continuing occupation of a part of the territories of the State of J&K, through peaceful means and bilateral discussions.

Border Trade with Bangladesh

2507. SHRI KHAGEN DAS: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)'whether there is any proposal sent by North-Eastern States for facilitating border trade with Bangladesh;

(b) if so, what steps have been taken by Government in this regard; and

(c) the reaction of Government of Bangladesh to this proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) At the 5th Indo-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting in March 1997, both sides discussed the question of trade in local produce between areas in India and Bangladesh at selected points contiguous to the border between the two countries and agreed to set up a group of experts to examine and make recommendations on the modalities of border trade.

Meeting of Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan at SAARC Summit

2508. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Prime Minister has expressed the desire to meet his Pakistan counterpart on the side-lines of the SAARC Summit, scheduled to be held in Colombo in July, 1998 and also called upon him to step forward, before the. summit meet, for a fruitful and sustained dialogue on a whole array of bilateral issues, including Kashmir as reported in the Hindustan Times dated 23 June, 1998, and

(b) if so, whether Pakistan has agreed to talk in the spirit of the Simla Agreement signed between the two countries in 1972 indicating the date and venue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) Prime Minister wrote to the Prime Minsiter of Pakistan on 14 June, 1998 reiterating India's commitment to fostering a peaceful and friendly relationship, and developing a stable structure of cooperation between India and Pakistan. In his letter, Prime Minister also convey-

ed to the Prime Minister of Pakistan that their presence in Colombo for the SAARC Summit would enable them to hold bilateral discussions on all issues of mutual interest, and also to decide on how to proceed further with the dialogue process. In his reply of 23 June, 1998, the Prime Minister of Pakistan agreed with Prime Minister's suggestion to hold bilateral discussions during the SAARC Summit in Colombo.

Prime Minister's letter to his Pakistani counterpart

2509. SHRI GURUDAS DAS ′
GUPTA:
SHRI N.R. DASARI:
DR. MOHAN BABU:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister had written to his counterpart in Pakistan, Shri Nawaz Sharif, making an offer for a dialogue on a whole array of bilateral issues, including Kashmir, and

(b) if so, the details and outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) Prime Minister wrote to the Prime Minsiter of Pakistan on 14 June, 1998 reiterating India's commitment to fostering a peaceful and friendly relationship, and developing a stable structure of cooperation between India and Pakistan. In his letter, Prime Minister also conveyed to the Prime Minister of Pakistan that their presence in Colombo for the SAARC Summit would enable them to hold bilateral discussions on all issues of mutual interest, and also to decide on how to proceed further with the dialogue process. In his reply of 23 June, 1998, the Prime Minister of Pakistan agreed with Prime Minister's suggestion to hold bilateral discussions during the SAARC Summit in Colombo.

False Propaganda against India by Pakistan

2510 SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what is the present infrastructure available our Missions in the Islamic countries to counter the false propaganda of Pakistan and inform these countries of the role of ISI in spreading terrorism in India.

(b) whether the Govt, has any proposal to expand the activities of ICCR to bring the Islamic countries nearer to India and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Missions in Islamic countries are fully geared to counter all anti-India propaganda. The infrastructure includes publicity tools like video projectors, satellite dish antennas, audio equipment etc. Embassies are also supplied audiovisual and print material for dissemination. Books are provided for Embassy libraries and for presentation purposes. Internet and electronic means are employed to conduct publicity activities. The Heads of Missions personally supervise this effort and tailor their approaches to the local milieu. Opinion and decision makers from all walks of life are cultivated to promote and project India's perspectives and values. India's democratic, pluralistic and multi-ethnic ethos coupled with its long history of tolerance is underscord to reinforce a positive image of our country. The Ministry regularly keeps the Missions abreast with latest developments through Spokesman's Statements and Press Releases and they in turn keep the local media. Government officials and other target groups informed about India's policies and initiatives.

(b) The full range of ICCR's activities including exchanges of cultural troupes, visits by academics, scholars and other